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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE SIXTH CONFERENCE

Report of Latvia

Paper submitted by Latvia**

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** Prepared by Jurgis Kavacs.

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NATIONAL REPORT OF LATVIA

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This is the first National Report of Latvia on the standardization of geographical names although the Republic of Latvia has been proclaimed already in 1918. The reason is that Latvia was part of the Soviet Union for many years. Therefore some peculiarities are paid attention to survey the toponymy of Latvia.

Inside every national group the place names functioned in separate parallel toponymic strata in Latvia before 1918. According to the policy of state language the official parallel toponymic stratum was subjected to changes after foundation the Republic of Latvia. The usage of the parallel toponymic strata gradually decreased in the following historical development. Nevertheless some place names from different parallel strata are used in literature, historical documents and maps. For that reason the short description of each stratum is given below.

There were four toponymic strata:

Livonian parallel toponymic stratum - in the 17-18th centuries this stratum has merged with Latvian except the cultural historical territory "Livod Randa".

German parallel toponymic stratum - German toponymic stratum has been official up to 1918 in Kurzeme and Vidzeme (two cultural historical parts of Latvia) and up to 1772 - in Latgale (the third cultural historical part of Latvia), including Russian transliterations in the former Russian Empire.

Russian parallel toponymic stratum - Russian toponyms have been official in Latgale since 1772 up to 1918.

Latvian parallel toponymic stratum - since 1918 up to nowadays place names from Latvian parallel toponymic stratum (including Russian transliterations) are official in Latvia. They are used in all official publications and cartographic issues.

German and Russian languages are not autochthonous in the territory of Latvia. Therefore those toponymic strata are not autochthonous, too.

The replacing of Russian and German parallel toponymic stratum by Latvian parallel toponymic stratum was not a toponymical renaming, it was changing of one simultaneosly existing toponymic strata by political conditions. At the same time (i.e. 20-ties and 30-ties many place names from Latvian parallel toponymic stratum with not Latvian origin were officially renamed in accordance to decision of the Saeima (Latvian Parliament) in 1924 and Law about names of real estates of 13th October 1936. Nowadays German and Russian toponymic strata are used in historical literature and maps mainly. The German minority repatriated themselves to their homeland Germany in 1939/40. Russian minority uses mainly Latvian toponyms, what is sanctioned by special laws. The names of cities and largest towns in different parallel toponymic strata are given below.

Latvian parallel toponymic stratum	German parallel toponymic stratum	Russian parallel toponymic stratum (transliteration)
Alūksne	Marienburg	
Balvi	Bolwa	Bolvy
Bauska	Bauske	
Cēsis	Wenden	
Daugavpils	Dünaburg	Dvinsk
Dobele	Dobeln	
Gulbene	Schwanenburg	
Jelgava	Mitau	
Jēkabpils	Jakobstadt	
Krāslava	Kraslau	Kreslavka
Kuldīga	Goldingen	
Liepāja	Libau	
Limbaži	Lemsal	
Ludza	Ludsen	Ljucin
Ogre	Oger	
Preiļi	Preln	Prel'
Rēzekne	Rositten	Režica
Rīga	Riga	
Salaspils	Kircholm	
Saldus	Frauenburg	
Talsi	Talsen	
Tukums	Tuckum	
Valka	Valck	
Valmiera	Wolmar	
Ventspils	Windau	

In the period from 1945 up to 1991 all large scale topographical maps of Latvia were compiled and published by central cartographic enterprises of the USSR. Latvian place names were transliterated in Cyrillic on them. Latvia could not participate in the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). The activities of UNGEGN came to Latvia through the former USSR.

PARTICIPATION OF LATVIA IN THE BALTIC DIVISION OF UNGEGN

The Baltic Division of UNGEGN was founded in 1992. On the 7-8th May the experts of Baltic States met in Tallinn to found a new division of UNGEGN. Russian experts joined the Baltic Division later. Latvia has taken part in all the activities of the Baltic Division since 1992 up to 1997.

The main topics of the agenda were the following:

- national standardization;
- place names databases and computerization of data;
- standardization of dialectal place names;
- names authorities and legal regulation of toponyms.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION AND NAMES AUTHORITIES

The administrative division of Latvia on the 1st November 1997 is:

- a district (rajons);
- a city (republikas pilsēta).

The district divides into:

- a town (rajona pilsēta);
- a civil parish (pagasts).

There are 26 districts, 7 cities, 69 towns and 513 civil parishes in Latvia at present. The following provisions exist for the official adoption of geographical names. Names of districts and cities are determined by the Saeima (Parliament). Names of ordinary civil parishes and villages are approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. Railway stations and stops, ports and airports are named by Ministry of Communications. Names for natural features are established by the State Land Service. The names of the objects mentioned above must be adopted by the local government and Committee of Place Names of the Cabinet of Ministers. Names of farms, streets, squares, parks, bridges and other objects are responsibility of local governments.

The Committee of Place Names mentioned above was established at the Cabinet of Ministers on the 4th June 1992. Geographers, linguists, historians, etc. are the members of the Committee of Place Names. The chairman is Mr. Ojārs Bušs.

CARTOGRAPHIC PROJECTS AND TOPONYMICAL DATA BASES PROBLEMS OF STANDARTIZATION

Current projects in the National Land Service are:

1. Ortophotomap of Latvia (scale 1:10 000). About 500 sheets of 2500 just now are ready.

2. Base Map of Latvia (scale 1:50 000). This project should be completed in 1998. The map consists of 132 sheets in Transverse Mercator projection. Its digital data are being distributed already.

3. State Topographic Map (scale 1:50 000) is being started this year. It will meet the demands of NATO standards. The map will be in UTM projection.

4. State Toponymic Database. The Toponymy Section of the State Land Service of Latvia is conducting field collection of place names on maps of 1:25 000 to support the Base Map of 1:50 000 and to gather information for the toponymical database. The database should include all designated objects of Latvia with one or more place names. It is envisaged that, rather wide additional information should be supplemented to the names.

5. Standardization of Place Names in minority languages. The only autochthonous language besides Latvian is the Livonian language, therefore the Law of State Language on Toponyms provides for the use of place names in Livonian in cultural historical territory "Līvod Rānda". In practice, however, the language is used by a very small number of speakers only.

In districts where the Latgallian dialect is used, the Committee of Place Names has decided (29th March 1993) to allow to standardize names of Latgola except those of parishes and their centres, on the basis of local usage.

The largest private cartographic enterprise is Publishing House "Jāņa sēta". The Cartography department of "Jāņa sēta" was founded in 1992. There are about 30 new cartographic titles in print every year, but the total run amounts to half a million copies.

MAIN PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The most actual problem in the standardization of place names of Latvia is the standardization of the names of villages. The current Official List of Villages is of 1982. It comprises 759 names, but in fact there are more than 3000 villages in Latvia. Two versions of The List of Villages of Latvia are being prepared.

The compilers are:

1. Toponymic Section of the State Land Service.
2. Publishing House "Jāņa sēta".

The intended Official List of Villages of Latvia will be based on them. In both project villages are divided into several types: villages, dispersed villages, summer villages etc.

PUBLICATIONS

Since 1992 were publiced:

I Gazetteers

Kavacs J. Valkas rajons. Dabas objektu nosaukumu vārdnīca. - Rīga., Latvijas Universitāte, 1993, 72. lpp., kartoshēma (Dictionary of the Names of Natural Features. Valka District).

Goba Z. Kuldīgas rajons. Dabas objektu nosaukumu vārdnīca. - Rīga., Latvijas Universitāte, 1994, 142. lpp., kartoshēma (Dictionary of the Names of Natural Features. Kuldīga District).

Avotiņa R., Goba Z. Latvijas upes. Nosaukumi un ģeogrāfiskais izvietojums. - Rīga., Latvijas Universitāte, 1994.(Rivers of Latvia. Names and Geographical Location).

Kovaļevska O. Krāslavas rajons. Ģeogrāfisko nosaukumu vārdnīca.- Rīga, 1997, 183. lpp., kartoshēma (Dictionary of Geographical Names. Krāslava District).

II Most significant other publications

Avotiņa R. Augšdaugavas vietvārdi Daugavpils rajonā. // Daugavas Raksti. No Koškovciem līdz Daugavpilij. - R., 1996., 20.- 34. lpp. (Place Names of Augšdaugava in Daugavpils District)

Balode L. The Exotic Borrowings in Latvian Toponymy. // First Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe. - Rīga, 1995.

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Kavacs J. Compiling and publishing of state topographic maps of Latvia 1921-1940.// Old maps of Baltic, 15th international simposium, 6-9 October 1996. - Riga, 1996. 54-56 p.p.

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Kovaļevska O. Vietvārdi Krāslavas rajona Piedaugavas pagastos un Šilovas-Vitebskas posmā. // Daugavas Raksti. No Koškovciem līdz Daugavpilij. - R., 1996., 89.-103. lpp. (Place Names Near the Daugava in Krāslava District and Span Schilovo - Vitebsk).

Laumane B. Zeme, jūra, zvejvietas: Zvejniecības leksika Latvijas piekrastē. - Rīga, Zinātne, 1996. (Land, See, Fisching places: Lexik of Fisching at Latvia Sea Shore)

Leikuma L. Dialektismi rakstu valodas bagātināšanai. // Baltu filoloģija IV. - R., 1994., 19.-26. lpp. (Dialectal Forms as Enrichers of Standard Language).